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**THE  
LIBRARY ASSISTANT**

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**The Official Journal  
of the Association of  
Assistant Librarians**

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# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS

(Section of the Library Association)

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HON. EDITOR: W. B. STEVENSON

Hornsey Public Libraries

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## Editorial and Announcements

**T**HIS might well be called a "Forces" number of the ASSISTANT, for in addition to Miss Gweneth Smith's report on Service libraries, we include two articles by librarians in the Army. It is gratifying to find that librarians in the Army, Navy, or Air Force can still find time to write on professional matters; any further articles by such members will be welcomed by us.

An interesting proposal has come from Mr. J. F. W. Bryon, who is at present serving with an A.A. Unit. He suggests that librarians in the Forces might like to correspond with each other on professional topics. Will any of our members in the Forces who are interested in the scheme please address enquiries to Mr. J. F. W. Bryon, Public Library, Beckenham, Kent. They will then be forwarded.

*Correction.*—The names of the auditors (Annual Report, p. 120, June-July issue) should read V. G. Hockey and J. F. Smith.

## CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

### COURSES, SUBJECTS, AND FEES

Courses, in all sections, are arranged to run from November to December of the following year. The subjects treated, and the respective fees for each section, are as set out below:

*Elementary Section.*—The Course covers the whole of the Library Association requirements for this section. Fee, £1 13s.

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*Intermediate Section.*—Part 1, Library Classification. Part 2, Library Cataloguing. Total inclusive fee, £2 5s. Either section may, however, be taken separately for a fee of £1 6s. 6d.

*Final Section.*—Part 1, English Literary History. Fee, £1 13s. Part 2, Bibliography and Book Selection and Historical Bibliography. Fee, £2 3s. 6d. Part 3, Advance Library Administration, including either of the specialized alternatives. Fee, £2 3s. 6d.

Non-members of the Library Association are charged double fees.

Students wishing to enter for any Course must obtain an application form from, and return it, together with the necessary fee, to, Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24. Applications must reach the above before 20th October for the November course. AFTER THIS DATE NO APPLICATIONS WILL BE CONSIDERED.

Students are reminded that applications for the Revision Courses in classification and cataloguing must reach Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, S.E.24, by 3rd September, after which date no application will be considered. These Revision Courses are intended only for students who have previously sat for the Intermediate Examination. In no circumstances will any other application be considered.

Full particulars are to be found in the current Library Association Year Book, or they may be obtained from Mr. Martin as above.

## Books for the Forces

Gweneth S. Smith

WE have heard quite a lot, one way and another, about "books for the Forces," but I do not think that the subject has so far been aired in any of our professional journals. It may, therefore, interest members of the A.A.L. to know that, following complaints from several sources, the Greater London Division decided to investigate the supply of books to men and women in the Forces and if possible to find a remedy for the dearth of books which was reported from all quarters. Members of the Division who are serving in the Army or R.A.F. were approached and asked to give, with as much detail as possible, their experiences of "libraries" provided in their units. Here are some extracts from the letters received:

"The barracks in which I am at present stationed contains some 900

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men distributed mainly in huts containing between 20 and 40 men. A small minority, mostly depot staff, are living in the erstwhile Married Quarters. Some of the huts have a small selection of 'Penguins' and periodicals. These collections are formed by contributions from the hut members. Other than this the only collection of books is in the Church Army hut where there is a small library. Books have to be read in the 'Quiet room' and cannot be taken away, so they are not much used. There are a large number of transfers from other regiments stationed here and I have made enquiries of them as to whether they have seen any of the millions of books collected for the Forces. In every case except one the answer was a negative. The exception was a member of the R.T.R. The local Welfare Officer had sent a collection of books. The pick of these were placed in the Officers' Mess, second choice was made by the Sergeants for their Mess, and those that were left were put into the N.A.A.F.I. canteen for the use of the rankers."

"Before leaving the library world for the R.A.F. I had heard much about the library services to the Forces and in my mind's eye had conjured up well-equipped camp libraries adequately stocked and run on lines something akin to those of the public library. My actual acquaintance with R.A.F. libraries has left me disillusioned, for we have a long way to go before anything approaching an adequate service is supplied. In the first place libraries are non-existent in many stations and where they do exist they are far too small, inadequately stocked, and need trained men to run them if full value is to be obtained from the service. One of the best R.A.F. libraries I have seen was in a large station catering for some thousands of men. The library was open for two hours on three evenings a week, was housed in a room 12 ft. square and contained some 500 books on open shelves. Each night one would find the room crammed full with would-be readers, the average attendance at any given moment being 50. Obviously the selection of books at an airman's disposal was ridiculously small, it was extremely difficult to get near the shelves, and no accommodation for reading in quiet and peace was available. The stock itself was fairly recent though very ill-balanced and contained no technical literature of any description. This in a station containing many pilots and air-crew of the future is deplorable. The 'librarians' were not professional men but in the circumstances performed their arduous duties very well, but hadn't any time whatever to devote to their readers who pushed their way to the shelves as well as possible and took the first book available."

"The many institutes that exist for soldiers' welfare and are run either by bodies like the Y.M.C.A., Salvation Army, or other denominational organization usually have a library (!). These seem to consist of whole-

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sale collections of books in a rather dirty condition and usually romances or tales by authors popular in 1860-90 and now unheard of. Added to this 'basic' stock are a few religious works, a collection of 6d. paper-backs, usually crime and adventure (not a bad thing that, really), with a very very poor sprinkling of the better type of novel (perhaps that's an accident) and scarcely any non-fiction, though one occasionally finds a few ancient travel books. Never anything technical, scientific, poetical, dramatic, or connected with all the other subjects read by the average borrower. These libraries are usually kept in bad condition, are badly worn, and are kept in no sort of order. Books may usually be borrowed for reading outside on a deposit of about 6d., which is returnable. The transactions are usually entered in an exercise book as they occur and the person doing the issuing is one of the canteen volunteers who is too busy serving tea to be worried about the library. I presume the books are donated by the local residents or people interested in the canteen.

"In fairness I should point out that I have come across one outstanding example of the opposite kind—a Toc H having a collection of books of all kinds (a few of the basic stock as before unfortunately) but also much modern material, including many standard works of modern fiction and a fair collection of non-fiction books on various subjects. This collection was classified and had a subject index, the books were in good condition and shelved conveniently in a room to themselves. I discovered that the library had been put in order by a qualified library assistant, who had since moved, but had been able to leave a book of rules behind and a small bevy of voluntary helpers who had 'got the idea.' Here again a deposit of 6d. is charged for membership, books are lent free of charge, and fines are charged as in normal public library practice. The fines go to the purchase of paper-backs for addition to the library, there being no other source for getting books. These new books consisted of the better type of novels and non-fiction works (like Pelicans and Penguin Specials) as well as detective yarns. I have not heard of another library quite like that—and even then the stock left a lot to be desired.

"On one occasion I remember a supply of new 'Penguins' came to our company office and were distributed to whoever wanted them, presumably for keeps. I believe they were all fiction books and I also believe they came from the 'Books for the Forces' H.Q. Apart from this solitary case, I have not seen or heard of any collection of books got together by this scheme or any of the wonderful 'Services libraries' that we hear so much about. Perhaps they go to the people in the far-flung outposts or isolated places in the country, it being presumed that others have adequate facilities through their situation near institutes or public



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library services. If facilities exist they are not widely advertised and that could be done easily and without great expense through company offices or by notices in such places as dining-halls or barrack-rooms."

These letters made it clear that the provision of books for the Forces left much to be desired and the Greater London Division Committee decided to act promptly in the matter. Copies of the letters were sent to a prominent Member of Parliament asking him for his help in approaching the problem from the War Office side, and letters were sent to the secretaries of the Services Libraries and Books Fund, the *Sunday times* Book Fund, and the Library Association, stating that many members now in the Forces had complained about the dearth of books in the units where they were stationed and asking for details about the number of books which had been distributed and where they had gone. The following are extracts from two replies:

From Major Jackson, Officer-in-Charge, Services Central Book Depot, Finsbury Barracks, E.C.1.

"In the Royal Navy all ships and establishments graded above that of destroyer are equipped with formed libraries at the public expense. In the Royal Air Force all R.A.F. stations are equipped with recreational libraries. . . . In the Army practically all training centres now have libraries and all Unit Commanders know how they can obtain supplies of books to make up a unit library.

"The total number of books distributed, however, approximates to 6,000,000, apart from magazines and periodicals."

From the Secretary of the Library Association:


"In reply to your letter about the provision of books for men on military service, I must first point out that it is very necessary to draw a sharp distinction between 'collections of books' and 'a suitable library.' There are very few of the latter but over four million books have been distributed for the former. Only a fortnight ago the President and I had a long interview with General Willans at which we failed to persuade him to provide materials for the building of library huts or to take official steps for trained librarians to be seconded to take charge of such libraries. He stated positively that there is a collection of books available for men of every unit and undertook personally to have the fullest investigation made into any case brought to his notice where books are not available, and this without any question of disciplinary action against any person."

The Member of Parliament immediately took the matter up and not only asked a question in the House of Commons and received a reply from the Secretary of State for War, but also wrote to Captain Margesson asking for the position to be investigated. In his reply to the letter the Secretary of State for War says: "I do not think that it is correct to say

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that men in the Army are cut off from worth-while reading material. The Public Library Service of the country is open to all members of the Forces, in the vast majority of cases without any charge whatsoever. And much good work has been done by Public Librarians in this connection. Overseas, libraries have been, and are being, established, and the selection of books is done by experts. Mobile libraries run by the W.V.S., stocked with high-class literature selected by the librarian of Oxford University, are now operating, and more are put into service each week. All units have been instructed to organize unit libraries and advised how to run them. All units know how to obtain supplies of books for this purpose, and attention is drawn to this in Command Orders every three months. Book Depots have been established in each Command at home, and Command Welfare Officers have been consulted and are unanimous that the supply of books is adequate. . . . I am satisfied that the scheme which I have outlined above is producing adequate results, and we have issued very recently special instructions to ensure that Public Library facilities are being made known to the troops. Professional librarians in the Forces can do most useful work by offering to help their unit Welfare Officer in the organization of the unit library."

I think it is clear from these letters that we have done all we can as far as book funds and official supplies of books for the men and women on active service are concerned, and it now remains for the civilian librarians to do their bit and to live up to the reputation that Captain Margesson gives them. Are all public and county librarians doing all they can in this important branch of their work? Many difficulties, largest of all lack of staff and sufficient funds probably, confront librarians at this time, but there must be ways in which they can help. Here are two suggestions, but each librarian must solve the problem according to local conditions which vary very considerably from place to place. All libraries are collecting books and magazines to be sent to the Forces, and perhaps it would be more satisfactory if these could be sorted carefully and distributed to local units or recreation rooms rather than sent to the headquarters of any of the book funds. Another suggestion is for the librarian to get in touch with the local Welfare Officer and together they will probably solve the problem to the satisfaction of all.



## Lest We Forget

E. T. Bryant

AT the time of writing I have been a member of H.M. Forces for about six months, and the other day I had a mental stocktaking. I asked myself, in effect, how much of my library knowledge I had lost, and if I had made any equivalent gain in any other directions. I decided that there was a loss, small as yet, but distinctly noticeable; and then pondered the possibilities of maintaining one's librarianship at a high, if not pre-war, standard.

The first loss is part of my stock-in-trade—authors and titles. So far it only amounts to an occasional mental effort to associate a particular title with the appropriate author, where earlier the answer would come automatically from one of the pigeon-holes of the mind. I can see but little chance of combating this, since one's knowledge of authors and titles is not built up by any real conscious effort, but unknowingly as one works among books and is asked for different titles many times a day.

Secondly, I am out of touch with new books. I read a number of reviews, but that is a poor substitute for handling the books themselves. There do not seem to be many books (in comparison with peacetime days) of outstanding and permanent merit published lately with which one must gain familiarity after the war, but in the field of popular fiction I for one will have much leeway to make up. I remember my mild surprise when one of my colleagues called up with the Territorial Army at the outbreak of war and on leave for the first time had not heard of *Dr. Bradley remembers*, though the library had an extremely long list of reservations for this most popular book. Now I in my turn find myself ignorant of the latest Philip Gibbs or Naomi Jacob title. The personal loss is negligible, but it will prove something of a handicap in dealing with borrowers after the war until one can bridge the gap and learn the most popular titles published during one's absence from the library world.

Thirdly, there is the loss for most of the temporary ex-librarians of librarianship itself. The tools are going rusty for lack of use. There is no cataloguing, classification, or reference work to keep one's mind at concert pitch, and this lack is probably the most serious of all.

The fourth loss is one of opportunity to do many things that were part of the normal routine in civilian life. Not only is spare time severely curtailed (though there seems to be a widespread notion that members of the Army and R.A.F. in particular have plenty of time on their hands) but the barrack-room is impossible for study purposes and hardly suitable for reading. Barrack-room life also seems to infect one with a mental

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lethargy that makes the reading of any book but the lightest an extremely difficult task.

On the credit side, military life offers very little to the librarian. It gives one a new viewpoint, so that criticism of one's own and other library systems can be made with some detachment. One meets with a cross-section of the male public of this country, and can attempt to discover why such a small proportion is to be found within our doors either in peace or war time. My own conclusion is that however informal the library, and however drastically the standard of literary taste is lowered, many of these non-users will remain outside the fold, and I am convinced that only by maintaining our standards at the highest possible level will we make librarianship the force that we all wish it to be in the life of the community.

There is one other item to be mentioned—reading matter can be provided for one's companions, and the knowledge gained in the library world can often be utilized to the advantage of men in the unit. The question of reading matter is dealt with more fully later.

If military life results in a loss of efficiency as a library assistant (however good a soldier, sailor, or airman one may become), several things can be done to make the loss as small as possible. Every assistant should keep in touch with the public library world as much as possible. The L.A. do a splendid job here by forwarding the *Record* direct to all members in the Forces, and those members in return should notify promptly to the Association any change of address. The keen assistant will also try to obtain other periodicals, such as the *T.L.S.* If one is fortunate enough to be within reach and use of a public library, take full advantage of the fact. Do not become just another borrower, and criticize openly or mentally the book selection, classification, etc. The library, if of any size, has almost certainly lost trained assistants, and should welcome any offer of knowledgeable help. This assistance may be irregular and for short periods, but every library has dozens of small jobs that a trained assistant can do, and the benefit will be mutual.

The pre-war members of library staffs still fulfilling their function of service to the public can do much to help any colleague in the Forces. I fully realize that in most cases their responsibilities have greatly increased, that they are having to work harder than ever before, and often have to do part-time civil defence duties in addition to their normal routine, but they can surely still find time to assist their temporarily absent colleagues. All soldiers, sailors, and airmen are tremendously appreciative of any correspondence, even though they may delay long in replying, and then only briefly. Write occasionally to the uniformed members of your staff, and do not be afraid to include "shop," since it will have acquired a new

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glamour for the recipient of your letter. If a colleague was in charge of any branch or department, or was particularly interested in a certain section of the library's stock, give him the latest news. In addition, see to it that every member receives regularly and promptly his ASSISTANT, and that the responsibility for forwarding it is not always left to someone else. In addition, kind-hearted souls can send on copies of periodicals such as the *Listener* and *Spectator* as soon as they can be spared from the library. Many systems buy only a single copy of the *Library world*, *Librarian*, and *Library review*, which are read by any interested member of the staff and filed. I would suggest that the order for these periodicals is doubled, and the second copy sent on to a member in the Forces. Ask for its return when read, and then send the copy on to another member. The more a library keeps its absent assistants in touch with the changes and struggles of librarianship, the less reconditioning necessary after the war.

Staffs can also help in a matter mentioned earlier. Nearly all libraries have collected books for the Forces, yet, despite the huge total amassed, very few men in the Forces have seen any of these books. If library assistants short-circuit the official channels and send the pick of their donations to their colleagues, the books are sure to be read by the people for whom they are meant, and the public library service receives a good mark from those who share the benefit. Penguins, etc., are very popular, particularly thrillers, but most enjoyment is given by periodicals of the *Picture post* type, since these can be skimmed when there are only a few minutes to spare, and possibly because a minimum of mental effort is required to appreciate them. Library assistants will probably have to defray the cost of postage themselves, but the amount of enjoyment given is out of all proportion to the sum so spent.

I would summarize my conclusions by saying that the keen librarian in the Forces will do all he can, both for himself and for the community's benefit, to keep his talents burnished, for that longed-for day when he ceases to be a number in a uniform and becomes a person again, ready and eager to pick up the threads of his interrupted career. The assistant at home who is keeping the flag flying for librarianship will do as much as possible to keep his or her colleague in khaki or blue supplied with suitable literature and news so that the tremendous tasks ahead of the profession when peace is restored can be faced by staffs that have not forgotten the knowledge that was once theirs.



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### Reconstruction: III

R. W. L. Collison

I DO not intend to rival the Agate saga, and this last instalment of notes on post-war reconstruction is rather a list of addenda to the first than an attempt at completion of an agenda whose construction is better fitted for a committee. Looking back over the points I have raised I find that the most important is omitted: finance remains the controlling factor in public libraries and some clearer policy on this point must be determined.

Even after the last war most authorities still thought of the cost of public library services in terms of penny and tuppenny rates. We need some central authority such as a Ministry of Libraries or a ten-times-more-powerful-than-it-is-at-the-moment Library Association to recommend an expenditure of so much *per capita*, and then local authorities can work out the result in penny rates for their own purposes. Again, there must be no discrepancy between the costs of county and municipal libraries: the counties must spend at an equal *capita* rate—which will at long last enable them to provide all the services they wish, and at the same time prevent the more unpleasant cut-price tactics of so many smart city-cum-county aldermen.

Expenditure on books, binding, and periodicals always remains at a very small percentage of total expenditure, and is always much smaller than the amount for salaries, low as that may be. It is as though a shop-keeper built a fine shop, engaged a good staff, and then sold remnants in the summer and bankrupt stock in the winter. A national recommendation on total expenditure *per capita* will not help matters unless it stipulates the percentage to be allocated to book expenditure: for instance, a recommendation of a public library expenditure of 2s. 6d. *per capita* would contain the proviso that 1s. 2d. of this amount must be spent on the three items enumerated above.

At the same time, some agreement must be reached on the question of salaries: it should not be possible for London libraries to attract so many of the most capable members of the profession merely because the salaries offered are so much greater than those paid by the provinces. Let the nation as a whole adopt a system similar to the Burnham scale (but with no provision for differentiation between men and women) and let each town, county, and city be assigned a definite grade on the scale by a responsible committee. In future, if a librarian is attracted to another

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library, let it be mainly because of the reputation of the town and its library rather than the munificence of its salary scales.

Two items on any financial statement are completely redundant: income tax and local rates. If libraries are essential then they are a charge on the nation: to exact income tax from an institution, rather than from the authority which controls it, is illogical. To charge rates is a waste of time: it involves an incredible amount of paper exchange of credits which in the end leaves everyone in the selfsame place where they were at first. It has no effect except to make the library appear to cost more than it in fact does. The policy of local government departments should stop being: How much can we charge the library? and should be instead, How much can we legally supply to the library? Much of the difficulty which faced librarians after the last war came from the negative attitude of councillors, town clerks, and treasurers.

Some libraries and many books have already perished: it is possible that more may disappear before the war is over. As to books, the work which Mr. Seymour Smith began before the outbreak of war becomes doubly important: a survey of books which need reprinting should be organized in earnest now, so that at the end of the war there may be a comprehensive list to present to publishers together with some estimate of numbers required. Such work as this cannot be hurried and there is every reason why it should be begun as soon as possible. Buildings and furniture will have to be replaced: we need two up-to-date and comprehensive text-books, one embodying the best ideas on library buildings in England and America, the other featuring the cream of designs for furniture and fittings. Brown's *Manual* is always behind times on these matters and, apart from that, cannot give more than a general survey of them if it is to preserve reasonable proportions. Besides this, at the end of the war the Library Association might well institute an exhibition of model libraries and this could at least be maintained in permanent form by means of scale models and photographs.

And, finally, some agreement must be reached concerning the position of the assistant within the Library Association. A pseudonymous writer in a recent number of the *Library world* commented on Mr. Stevenson's appeal for contributions, saying that assistants no longer appeared to take much interest in their magazine, and hinting that their apathy would make the work of abolishing both A.A.L. and LIBRARY ASSISTANT much easier. Such wishful thinking and addle-patedness take no heed of the fact that the bulk of the male members of the A.A.L. is in H.M. Forces, and that the majority of women librarians are doing A.R.P. work in addition to their own duties. It is, moreover, a clear indication of the stupidity and prejudice of an influential minority with which we shall have

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to cope after the war. We do not expect the A.A.L. to run the Library Association; but, equally so, we do not expect the Library Association to run the A.A.L.

In order to earn the confidence of its members after the war the Library Association must ensure reasonable representation and the most generous facilities to every type and age-group in the Association. We can best establish a better status and an improved reputation in the eyes of the general public by observing the most liberal concepts inside our own profession. Moreover, as far as assistants are concerned it is essential that their journal shall be allowed to continue its existence without undue control over its contents: better an outspoken and critical membership than one which is so regimented that it lacks originality and imagination.

So much for my castles in Spain: they may not agree in every particular with your own. If they do not it is quite time now that the A.A.L. should hear your own point of view: to keep progress alive in wartime is one of the great arts of true democracies, and if librarianship cannot take its part in that work its future will indeed lack lustre.



## Current Books: People and Places

CHARLES DOUGLAS. *Artists quarter*. Faber. 18s.

A VALUABLE appendix to the more conventional histories of art, describing the palmy days of Montmartre and Montparnasse from 1904-1920. Each street housed dozens of poets, sculptors, and painters, and the cabarets and cafés were full of talkative artists and their models. Mr. Douglas knew most of them, and describes them in a book full of pride for their achievements and generosity for their follies. The central figure is Modigliani, a debauched genius whose energy in the production of masterpieces was only equalled by his capacity for drink or drugs.

ROBERT HENREY. *A Farm in Normandy*. Dent. 12s. 6d.

When the author sunk all his savings in a lovely farmhouse set in the rich land of Normandy, he looked forward to a future as a farmer supported by his own land. He was to see his beloved France scarred by war, Le Havre in flames, and to experience all the sorrows of a refugee. He had two years of happiness, however, and he describes them lovingly: the crafty peasants and villagers come to life, the apple vintage is distilled, the farm flourishes. A charming book, full of character.



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JAMES AITKEN. *English diaries of the XVI-XVIIIth centuries.*

LAURA KNIGHT. *Oil paint and grease paint (3 vols.).*

Penguin Books, 6d. each.

Two welcome additions to the Penguins. The first contains excellently edited and selected passages from the best English diarists, including Evelyn, Pepys, Swift, Wesley, Fielding, and Fanny Burney. There is just enough of each to create an appetite for more, and the selections should induce the reader to seek the complete text. Laura Knight's vivacious autobiography, full of gypsies and circuses, is too well known to need much comment. This edition is a triumph for Penguin Books: the 32 photogravure illustrations are really superbly produced.

JAMES POPE-HENNESSEY. *History under fire.* Batsford. 12s. 6d.

A record of the many masterpieces of architecture from Elizabethan times onward that have been destroyed during the great raids on London. The author is an expert on his subject, and his record will be of great value. Cecil Beaton's photographs are magnificent: they at once convince us of the beauty that has vanished, and also possess a sombre and rather terrifying beauty of their own.

GEORGE SAVA. *Valley of forgotten people.* Faber. 12s. 6d.

An extraordinary tale of adventures in the Caucasus, where the people are as wild and as primitive as the scenery. Sava and his picturesque prince cum servant, Shota, travel through mountain and valley in search of a kidnapped bride, and there are encounters with lawyers, perfume sellers, and bandits, to name only a few. The bride is found and a picturesque marriage ceremony ends the book. Although the conditions described seem to be those of about thirty years ago, before the Russian Revolution, the book is an interesting record of a little-known people.

F. A. WALBANK. *The English scene.* Batsford. 12s. 6d.

At such a time as this it is refreshing to read these well-chosen passages describing the life of England. Whether it is Priestley on the Midlands or Jefferies on poaching, all touch on the variety of life in farm or town,

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on England at work or England at play. The editor contributes a brief introduction to each section, and the illustrations from contemporary prints are as excellent as the prose. The publishers are to be congratulated on the production of yet another good anthology.



## Correspondence

KENT COUNTY LIBRARY,  
WHITSTABLE BRANCH.  
20th July, 1941.

THE EDITOR,  
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

I think that it should be brought to the notice of your readers that there are assistants on the staff of large library systems who allow themselves the liberty of writing anonymous letters of abuse to those who have the hardihood to sign their names to articles in the *LIBRARY ASSISTANT*. It is in my opinion a disgrace to the profession that any assistant should be capable of such conduct.

Some weeks ago I received an anonymous letter on the subject of my article "Resigned on Marriage" from a gentleman in Manchester. It is a pity that he did not have the courage to admit his identity, since nothing could have been easier than to refute his arguments, and I should have been glad to have explained to him the point of my article.

I say nothing of the purely personal abuse contained in his letter, although I think that it constitutes a better reason for his not sending it to your correspondence columns than his own excuse that he does not wish to use your columns as a medium for anti-feminist propaganda.

I would, however, like to mention two of the more serious arguments he puts forward. The first point is that women deteriorate in efficiency on marriage. This is, frankly, an impossible point to argue since there is no sufficient body of evidence drawn from experience, on which alone the question can be decided. If, however, it is generally true that women do deteriorate on marriage, it makes one wonder why married women are employed in other walks of life such as business, factories, or domestic service, or whether there is something subtly demoralizing about the library profession.

The second point is that to retain married women is to increase the salary bill, and block the way for younger entrants to the profession.

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This is, of course, quite true, but it is not a valid argument since it could be, with equal force, applied to any group of librarians. If all men, or all red-headed assistants, were dismissed at the age of 25 there would be much smaller salary bills and more vacancies for juniors, but where is the committee that would adopt such a policy? It should be recognized that such an argument is one of expediency and not of logic.

I should be most grateful if you would print this letter, as I wish to draw attention of members of the Association of Assistant Librarians to the fact that there are among them those who are willing to attack people in what I can only call an extremely underhand way.

Yours truly,

HONOR LIDDLE.

R.A.F. STATION,  
SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND.

THE EDITOR,  
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

SIR,—

Whilst I do not wish to prolong the correspondence on the subject of female assistants, I feel that there is a certain amount of misunderstanding which should be cleared up. Miss Liddle in her much cited article declares, "it is frequently not possible until late in life to achieve the economic status which permits" a man to support wife and children on his earnings. Why? Is it not largely because the bread-winner has to compete on an equal basis with named and unnamed women without the same financial responsibilities?

Either we must resign ourselves to a state of affairs whereby husband and wife both need to earn incomes, surely in most cases a highly undesirable arrangement; or the man must be given the priority to which his additional responsibility entitles him. There are, of course, some women who do not marry and these cannot fairly be confined to junior appointments. Thus the obvious solution is to treat both sexes equally until the woman actually marries and then to introduce some form of restriction, which is, in the main, the present state of affairs. It undoubtedly is hard for some women who have studied to gain qualifications to be forced to resign on marriage, but the pill must be swallowed. The alternative would be an injustice to all men struggling to keep families.

Finally, I do not say, as Miss Watson implies, that women *never* look on librarianship as a career, only that the majority do not, a fact on which, in spite of the testimony of Miss Mayes, I must insist. Further, whilst I

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hate Hitler and his brutal regime, if the belief that a woman's place is, in general, in the home exposes me to a charge of pro-Nazi sentiment I cheerfully plead guilty.

Yours faithfully,

J. LE VIERGE HALL.

(This correspondence must now cease.—Ed.)



## On the Editor's Table

HEADICAR, B. M. *A Manual of library organisation*. 1941. 2nd ed. revised. Pp. 293. Allen & Unwin. 10s. 6d. (The Library Association Series.)

A second edition of this deservedly popular text-book is very welcome, although the revision is slight. Paragraphs have been added on Leytonstone Branch Library and the new Brotherton Library, Leeds, and the sections on microphotography and the net book agreement have been rewritten; three extra illustrations appear, the bibliography has been carefully enlarged, and a list of examination questions set 1935-38 added.

It is regrettable that the author has not included references to the Local Government Act, 1933, or to the provisions of the L.C.C. (General Powers) Act, 1936, regarding lectures. As a result of care taken to avoid resetting type, too many 1932 financial figures remain, while innovations in public library furniture and fittings are passed over. Is it too much to expect a chapter on present conditions?

Mr. Headicar knows his ground, and he writes with gusto; its scope understood, this text-book will continue to have a valuable place on the student's shelf.

A. J. W.



